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Feb. 22, 2001
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NEWS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON STUDENTS SHUNNING SUN AND SURF TO PERFORM COMMUNITY SERVICE DURING SPRING BREAK

DAYTON, Ohio — Garrett Prom is eager for spring break to arrive, as are many thousands of other college students.

"I'm ready for some fun," says the University of Dayton senior. "I'm really looking forward to getting out of town."

When Prom leaves town it won't be toward sun and surf. You won't see him dancing to 3 Doors Down on an MTV spring break special. Instead, the electrical engineering major will be reading to students at a Catholic elementary school in rural Pritchard, Ala.

The Milwaukee native and 130 other UD students are participating in the University's Spring Break-Out program March 9-18, an annual event designed to introduce them to community service throughout the country.

"This is one of the greatest experiences of my life," says Prom, 22, who spent spring vacation last year in Trenton, N.J., building houses for low-income residents and tutoring inner-city children. "Going into it last year, I didn't realize the pleasure and gratification I'd feel. That's why I'm going again this year."

Alison Radelet, 20, a secondary education major from Detroit, is heading to Haiti to tour schools, orphanages and children's hospitals. It will be her second time there and her fifth break-out trip, as several are also held each year in May at the end of the school year.

"I've seen just a glimpse of the slums of Haiti," she recalls from last year's trip. "I've also seen wards full of babies dying from malnutrition and AIDS. But it's had a major impact on me and in how I see the world. These trips have changed me forever."

Service trips started at UD in 1989 when a small group of students in the Pax Christi student service club organized a trip to the Bronx. By 1991, 35 students participated in four service trips, and the number has grown each year since then. This year UD students chose from 15 service trips.

Last spring, almost 30,000 students across the nation participated in some type of

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alternative break experience, according to Break Away, a national resource of information on alternative break programs that is based at Vanderbilt University.

UD Spring Break-Out projects this year range from experiencing American Indian culture and building Habitat for Humanity homes in Eagle Butte, S.D., to learning more about the civil rights movement while touring historical sites in the South, such as Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma, Ala.

One group of UD students will provide a wide variety of social services to Latino and African-American communities in Chicago, including helping out in a Head Start program and youth center. Another group will travel to Salyersville, Ky., to perform a variety of service projects in this rural Appalachian community. Still another will travel to Juarez, Mexico, to learn about immigration issues and worker exploitation along the U.S.-Mexican border.

Jessica Gruenke, 20, a public relations major from Sheboygan, Wis., will spend her break in rural Salyersville, Ky., rehabbing homes and learning about Appalachian culture. Last year she traveled to Bronx, N.Y., to work with inner-city children and tutor adults who were working toward their GEDs.

"Because we travel in groups, the trips are a good way to make new friends from UD," the junior says. "I think it has to do with experiencing an important event together. It can be life-altering."

"This is a chance to do something worthwhile for others," says Nick Cardilino, coordinator of community outreach and service clubs for UD's Center for Social Concern. "It's more than an opportunity to see the issues faced by other cultures. It's a really a way to make deep friendships and to reflect and pray on the experience."

Cardilino adds that the spring break program also develops leaders, as each trip is planned and led by students.

"This is so much more rewarding than a trip to Daytona or Fort Lauderdale," Prom says. "I'm seeing new places and gaining an appreciation for community service I never thought imaginable."

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For media interviews, contact the students before March 8 or after March 18: **Garrett Prom** at (937) 627-8529 or via e-mail at promgarm@flyernet.udayton.edu, **Alison Radelet** at (937) 443-0024 or via e-mail at aradelet@yahoo.com and **Jessica Gruenke** at (937) 229-2524 or via e-mail at gruenkejl@flyernet.udayton.edu. **Nick Cardilino** can be reached at (937) 229-2524 or via e-mail at njc@udayton.edu. For more background, see the spring break-out Web site at <http://www.udayton.edu/~csc/springbreakouts.htm/>.